**WHAT’S THE NSF AND THE NSF SBIR/STTR PROGRAM?**

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is an independent federal agency created by Congress in 1950 to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; and to secure the national defense. A $7 billion budget currently supports fundamental research and education across all fields of science and engineering.

At NSF, the Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer ([SBIR/STTR](http://1.usa.gov/1v4SnG1)) is an approximately $170 million program that catalyzes the commercialization of high-risk technological innovations via research and development (R&D) grants to startups and other small businesses.

**Grants that go beyond funding:** NSF SBIR/STTR grants go beyond R&D funding; recipients receive training in key business areas and gain mentorship from Program Directors who have extensive experience in industry.

**Mission** **& value statement:** The NSF SBIR/STTR program seeks to transform scientific discovery into societal / economic benefit by emphasizing private sector commercialization. To catalyze this, NSF SBIR/STTR increases the incentive and opportunity for startups and small businesses to undertake cutting-edge, high-quality scientific research and development.

**IS MY COMPANY A GOOD FIT?**

The NSF SBIR/STTR program seeks to assist companies with early-stage technologies that require additional research and development in order to advance commercialization. Answer the questions below to see if your product or service is a good fit for an SBIR/STTR grant:

Eligibility

* Is your company a startup or small business with 500 or fewer employees (including affiliates)?
* Is your company or startup U.S. based?
* Is your company independently owned and operated?
* Is your company a for-profit entity?
* Is your company at least 51 percent owned and controlled by one or more individuals who are citizens of, or permanent resident aliens in the United States?
* If your company has received numerous SBIR/STTR Phase I or Phase II awards (across all agencies), does your company meet the [Performance Benchmarks](http://www.sbir.gov/performance-benchmarks)?

Good Fit (Funding Philosophy)

* Is your technology-based solution highly innovative? Never been attempted or successfully achieved before?
* Would your proposed product or service have the potential to disrupt the targeted market segment? Create significant commercial impact and/or societal benefit?
* Are technical hurdles stopping or slowing the commercialization of your technology?​

If you answered “Yes” to all of the eligibility requirements but are not certain about the fit of your technology/company, you may submit a 1-2 page executive summary to [sbir@nsf.gov](mailto:sbir@nsf.gov) or a specific Program Director. To learn more about the summary requirements and executive summary pre-submission feedback process, visit the ["Is NSF SBIR/STTR a Good Fit"](http://www.nsf.gov/eng/iip/sbir/goodfit.jsp) website.

**Principal Investigator Insights:** The Principal Investigator is the person who submits the proposal material and the main person overseeing the project.

Principal Investigator requirements**:**

* The primary employment of the Principal Investigator (PI) must be with the small business/startup at the time of the award.
  + Primary employment is defined as 51 percent employed by the small business for the duration of the award. The NSF SBIR/STTR considers employment elsewhere of greater than 19.6 hours to be in conflict with fulltime status.
  + A PI must spend a minimum of one calendar month on a Phase I project.

**SOLICITATION LIMITS**

TheNSF SBIR/STTR currently limits each organization to no more than two proposals per solicitation cycle and one Principal Investigator (PI) to each proposal. If your company submits two proposals in December, they must have different PIs and be different projects.

**HOW DO I APPLY?**

The NSF SBIR/STTR proposal submission deadlines are generally in June and December. To help in the application process there are multiple online resources that include a [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGhBP1C7iCOmokMcwe3aVqASeJHHbPXTL) channel and a preparation booklet (Go to: <http://www.nsf.gov/eng/iip/sbir/documents/Phase_I_Proposal_Preparation_Booklet.pdf>) that provides a detailed step-by-step guide to assist applicants through the Phase I proposal submission process. It is recommended that applicants register for [Q & A webinars](http://www.nsf.gov/eng/iip/sbir/Webinar/PhaseI.jsp) hosted by Program Directors to familiarize themselves with the submission process. The process begins with a proposer registering on *all* the following sites:

* [Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS)](http://www.dnb.com/)
* [System for Award Management (SAM)](https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM)
* [Small Business Administration (SBA) Company Registry](http://www.sbir.gov/registration)
* [NSF FastLane](https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/n1/N1AddInst.html)

**SUBMISSION SECTIONS AND DEADLINES**

**SBIR & STTR** **PROPOSAL CHECKLIST\***

* Project Summary
* Project Description
* References Cited
* Current & Pending Support
* Biographical Sketches
* Facilities, Equipment, and other Resources
* Budget
* Supplementary Documents

\*The above checklist is an overview. Please review the official online [SBIR proposal checklist](http://www.nsf.gov/eng/iip/sbir/phase_I_proposal_check%20list.jsp) and [STTR proposal checklist](http://www.nsf.gov/eng/iip/sttr/phase_I_proposal_check%20list.jsp) for a detailed breakdown of all requirements.

**Project Summary:** The project summary should be written in the third person and understandable to a scientifically or technically literate lay reader. It should not be an abstract of the proposal. The Project Summary is completed in FastLane by entering information into three text boxes; collectively these three text boxes cannot exceed 4,600 characters:

* *Box 1:* Overview, Key Words, and Subtopic Name
* *Box 2:* Intellectual Merit- This section *must* begin with *"This Small Business Innovation Research Phase I project" or “This Small Business Technology Transfer Phase I project"*
* *Box 3:* Broader/Commercial Impact

**Project Description:** The project description mentioned previously must include the sections listed below in order to have a successful submission:

* Summary (no more than 1 page)
* Market opportunity (recommended 2-4 pages)
* Innovation (recommended 1-3 pages)
* Company/Team (recommended 1-3 pages)
* Technical discussion and research and development plan (minimum 5 pages, recommended 5-7 pages)
* Total page limit is 15 pages

**References Cited:** If your proposal uses other sources, be sure to cite that information into the FastLane system. Provide a comprehensive listing of relevant references, including patent numbers and other intellectual property citations.

**Current & Pending Support of Principal Investigator:**Provide information regarding the following activities, regardless of whether the Principal Investigator (PI) will receive a salary from the following activities:

* All current and pending support for ongoing projects and proposals (from any source) including continuing grants funding.
* Proposals that are already submitted; concurrent submission of a proposal to other organizations will not prejudice its review by NSF.
* Upcoming submissions that involve the PI or senior personnel.
* The proposal being submitted is considered "pending" and therefore must appear in the Current and Pending Support module.

**Biographical Sketches:** Provide a resume for the Principal Investigator (PI) and key personnel.

**Facilities, Equipment, and other Resources**: Specify the availability and location of significant equipment, instrumentation, computers, and physical facilities necessary to complete the portion of the research that is to be carried out by the proposing firm in Phase I.

**Budget:** NSF SBIR/STTR is piloting a streamlined budget, in which proposers request $225,000 in the initial application and provide a general description of what funds will be used for. If the proposal is considered for award, the proposer will be asked to submit a full budget and budget justification at that time.

* Keep in mind that large equipment purchases are not appropriate requests for a Phase I budget.
* If partners will be involved, keep in mind the following budget allocation rules:
* SBIR: Funds dedicated to subawards and consultants should make up less than 1/3 of the total budget.
* STTR: There must be a subaward to a research institution, and it should make up at least 30 percent of the budget; the small business (total budget minus subawards and consultants) should make up at least 40 percent of the budget.

**Supplementary Documents:** Please refer to the Program Solicitation webpage for the types of supplementary documents that may be applicable to your proposal.

**Deadline:** Proposals are typically due in December and June, and solicitations are published at least 90 days before the deadline date. Proposals submitted after 5 p.m. on the deadline date will be returned without review. Applicant's local time is defined as the time zone associated with the company’s address registered with NSF at the time of proposal submission.

**ACCEPTANCE PROTOCOL**

SBIR/STTR prospective grantees will be notified by NSF to provide a signed [SBIR/STTR Funding Agreement Certification](http://www.nsf.gov/eng/iip/sbir/Forms/SBIR_STTR_Funding_Agreement.pdf). The federal government relies on the information provided by grantees to determine whether the business is eligible for a SBIR or STTR Program award. Certification will be used to ensure continued compliance during the life of the funding agreement.